

Pastoral Vacation

Richard Becker

As our car rounded a curve in the dusty country road on a hot August day, my cousin and I caught sight of the farm on which we were going to spend a month. As we drove up to it, the farm presented a picture which was new and enticing. Being nine years old and on a vacation is enough to excite anyone's imagination. Therefore, we did not notice the old unpainted weatherboards of the house, the rusty tin roof of the porch, or the shaggy grass which was overrunning the front-yard. We did see the old rain barrel beside the house, the huge swing on the porch, and the chickens clucking about in the side yard; and in the distance we could see the big red barn, the rickety corncrib, and the shaded milk house. As we hurried through the gate, we saw our white-bearded host coming to greet us. Uncle Frank was just what the setting needed to make it complete.

Our enthusiasm was not dampened by the interior of the house, because it was completely in harmony with its fascinating exterior. Naturally, we were very much interested in the kitchen, from which pleasant odors frequently came. The queen of that room, we soon learned, was the hired cook, Callie. It seemed that she was always working over her wood-burning cookstove, and, of course, we were always ready to eat. All of the meals were served on a long table with benches to match. We thought this picnic-type furniture quite odd for a kitchen, but Uncle Frank explained that in a bygone day farm hands had eaten at that table. These unusual surroundings added an exciting touch to mealtime. Before long we had explored the rest of the house from its gloomy summer kitchen to its relic-filled attic.

Of course we spent most of our time outdoors. We found many things to do which were quite foreign to us and therefore great adventures. How excited we were when Uncle Frank would let us ride his tired, old horses, Nell and Jake. Riding over the never-ending fields, we would often pretend to be farm hands herding the woolly sheep which grazed under rows of persimmon trees, but we were always interrupted by imaginary bands of Indians swooping down upon us. Then we would hurriedly retreat to the barn. When we were in the safety of its walls, we would forget the Indians, and our new diversion would often be hide-and-seek. At times, how-

ever, we would just sit in the rough bed of the hay wagon and tell wild stories. Here we would often imagine ourselves to be victims of dangerous bandits who had descended from the hayloft. Whatever we did we always had an exciting time. Toward the end of each busy day our imaginary Indians would find us in the barn, and we would let them chase us to the weatherbeaten house, to our waiting supper, and to our soft feather beds. Then we would fall asleep to dream about the farm, the Indians, and the wonderful vacation we were having.

Story of Tommy Gromeko (In argot)

Ted Black

As criminal reporter for the **Chicago Comet**, it was my job to investigate the criminal case of Tommy Gromeko, better known in the underworld as the "Chicago Kid." When Gromeko ambled into the line-up, I knew he was headed for the big house. A fag dangled loosely from his lips. His glad rags, tailor-fitted, marked him as a professional thug. I asked permission to interview Gromeko and the request was granted.

Upon entering the cooler I found Tommy cool as a cucumber. There was little gab on my part, but Gromeko had a few choice words for the occasion. "I ain't squealin' to any flatfoot. You cowboys may take me for a stool pigeon, but I ain't ratin' on nobody. Now scram before I slit your gizzard." I left, for cleverly concealed under Gromeko's coat was a shiv and a gat.

The boys in blue tried every possible method to make Tommy squawk. Under the heat lamp Tommy just sweat it out. I had this guy pegged from the start. Gromeko was nobody's stooge. However, this was one rap Gromeko wasn't going to skip.

The trial started slowly but finished fast. The dicks had the goods on Gromeko. Tommy said he had been framed and the trial had been fixed, but this defense was of no avail. The judge threw the book at Gromeko; the verdict was guilty, and the penalty was death.

On May 1, 1939, Gromeko walked the last mile. Tommy